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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 004420

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/RSA, EB/TRA/AN, S/CT  
DEPT ALSO PASS TO DOT/OST CONNIE HUNTER  
FOR DHS/TSA ASSISTANT SECRETARY HAWLEY

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/13/2016  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [BAIR](#) [CASC](#) [ECON](#) [KE](#) [SO](#)  
SUBJECT: SECURITY CONCERNS PERSIST AT WILSON AIRPORT

Classified By: Charge John Hoover for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Concerns about security and possible terrorism at Nairobi's Wilson Airport persist. The Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) notice of October 4 moving all Somalia passenger flights from Wilson to the better-regulated Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) should help, but Kenya Airport Authority's (KAA) plans to upgrade Wilson do not appear likely to effectively address other vulnerabilities. The UK revised its travel advisory on September 26 to specifically mention problems at Wilson, and Post will likely recommend a similar change at the next renewal of the Department's travel warning. End Summary.

What is the Threat?

¶2. (SBU) Wilson Airport is a general aviation airport on the south side of Nairobi, about 4 km from the city center, and 14 km from the U.S. Embassy. The basic threat at Wilson is the possibility of aircraft hijacking/hostage taking involving AmCits, or a suicide flight against the U.S. Embassy. Although Immigration and Customs are supposed to check all incoming flights at Wilson, controls are in fact weak, raising the possibility that Wilson could be a conduit for weapons or terrorists smuggled from Somalia into Kenya. Flights from Somalia or other foreign origins could also be used for suicide attack against the Embassy or other targets. The GOK has still not responded to Embassy's repeated requests to publish the alleged restriction of the Embassy's airspace, or to establish an early warning system with the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority's (KCAA) radar operators.

¶3. (C) The expansion of territory controlled by the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) in Somalia has raised the GOK's security concerns about flights from Somalia. On October 4, after meetings with the aviation industry and the National Aviation Security Council, the KCAA issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) requiring all flights carrying passengers to or from Somalia to use JKIA, effective immediately. Private aviation representatives welcomed the change, which they had long advocated. While the NOTAM allowed cargo flights to and from Somalia to use other airports (Wilson), it specified that all flights carrying more than the required flight crew must also use JKIA. A KCAA official told EconOff that any passengers from Somalia arriving at Wilson would be arrested, along with the air crew. If any cargo flight arrived with more than the required one or two crew, all the personnel would be arrested. He could not say whether passengers would be taken to JKIA Immigration for processing or be returned to Somalia. An Immigration official at Wilson told a DHS officer he thought the ban on Somalia passengers would be temporary.

Wilson Airport Remains Vulnerable

¶4. (U) There are about 200 "resident aircraft" based at Wilson Airport. A third of these are very light "private" recreational aircraft. The rest, ranging from 4-seater Cessna 182 to a Dash 7, are flying commercially. Although most are small aircraft that cannot carry a significant cargo of fuel or explosives, in the absence of greater control over flights in and out of Wilson, these

aircraft still represent a potential threat to the Embassy. Most commercial flights are domestic, transporting tourists to/from the game parks and coastal resorts. There are a few private aircraft operators who fly for pleasure or to carry supplies to their farms, a few flights training new pilots, and a few charter operators who fly business people and tourists to East African towns and cities. After Somalia collapsed in the early 1990s, Wilson Airport became the gateway for daily flights carrying miraa (khat) to Somalia, and passengers and refugees to Kenya. Currently, there are about 20 flights daily from Wilson to Somalia.

15. (U) Until the perimeter fence was built in 1979, anybody could drive into the various Wilson airport hangars and offices bordering the tarmac from Langata Road. The British and U.S. governments have been working with KAA and KCAA to improve security at all Kenyan airports, including Wilson, through the Safe Skies for Africa (SSFA) program. The World Bank is funding a multi-million dollar program to upgrade Kenya's airports, including Wilson, to expand their capacity to handle the burgeoning demand and improve their safety and security to the FAA Category One and ICAO standards necessary for direct flights to the U.S.

16. (SBU) There is one small terminal at Wilson with no proper passenger check-in facilities, and some of the operators have built their own terminals for handling passengers. There are currently 17 entrances to the tarmac through various hangars, gates and private terminals. Currently, KAA Security tries to screen all passengers and luggage at the terminal before they board their flights and all employees before they go out onto the airfield. Flights are also required to taxi to a police checkpoint before takeoff, but any check is perfunctory. Embosffs have observed workers and police walking around without displaying badges, and senior GOK officials avoiding screening. KAA security officials explained the unbadged casual workers were on a group pass, but quickly installed a machine to produce temporary badges. No solution has yet been found to force police to display their badges.

15. (SBU) KAA officials asked UK and U.S. Embassy officials responsible for aviation security and safety to review a proposal a Dutch firm submitted to the KAA under the World Bank upgrade project to build a fence between the existing hangars and terminals and the runway with three gates for aircraft. After walking the whole flightline and observing the lax security at several points, the officials stated the proposal would not improve safety or security. (A fuel facility did not ask the visitors walking past tanks if they had any matches or lighters.) The proposal for security officials to stop and search all taxing planes at the gates was impractical and would not be effective. Instead, the officials recommended KAA staff and equip three access points to the runway, taxiways, hangars and terminals with full, consistent screening for all passengers, staff, equipment and cargo. Buildings along the flightline could either have access to the road or to the flightline and hire their own security guards against theft. If they needed access to both the road and the flightline (Flying Doctors), they should pay KCAA to provide security personnel for screening. It is currently easy for persons to avoid KAA screening by walking through hangars.

16. (C) British Embosff informed KAA the High Commission would recommend adding a specific mention about Wilson to their travel advisory because of concerns about the threat represented by Somalis entering Kenya, even if they are processed by Immigration. Embosffs reminded KAA Security Chief Stanley Mutungi that KAA is legally responsible for overseeing the security of incoming flights. He noted that enforcing inspection and screening requirements in Mogadishu would be rather difficult, that some Somalis are sent back, and offered to provide the list of all Somalis who have arrived at Wilson. The PISCES system set up by DHS at Wilson is operating, and Immigration recently used it to process 28 Western tourists. DHS plans to connect the Wilson PISCES system to Immigration HQ to provide real time monitoring and make it easier for Immigration to use the "Stop List."

17. (C) Both Embassies asked for the report on the 2005 explosion at Wilson, but Mutungi claimed that Police Commissioner Ali has the only copy. Embosffs also expressed concern about proposals from a GOK Committee, warning that transferring security responsibility from KAA to the police would not meet ICAO requirements, and would lead us to strengthen the travel warning. Pryor warned HMG would likely ban BA flights to Kenya. Instead, they suggested that KAA improve its staff and procedures, and press Commissioner Ali for a dedicated airport police detachment answerable to the KAA Managing Director.

18. (U) On September 26, the UK added the following text to its Kenya

travel advisory: "We are concerned about the lack of security arrangements in place at Wilson airport in Nairobi. The airport is mainly used for domestic flights, including charters. These have been raised with the Kenyan authorities. We continue to monitor the situation. You should remain vigilant at all times." After reviewing the security situation with TSA rep and Econoff, Consul General agreed he would propose similar changes in the Department's travel warning when it comes up for renewal in December 2006.

#### Worried About KAA and World Bank Oversight

¶9. (C) Separately, KAA's decision to sign a contract with a Chinese firm with no previous airport construction experience for the first phase of JKIA expansion sparked worries about the integrity of the World Bank's oversight of its multi-million dollar airport upgrade and expansion project. A confidential source informed the TSA rep that KAA had demanded bidders provide a \$1 million kickback to Managing Director George Muhoho, but this allegation has not been confirmed. Anil Bhandari, the Washington-based Bank official in charge of the project, and the DOT's Safe Skies for Africa Program Director had asked the local Bank staff to include the TSA rep in all discussions and reviews, but the local staff ignored access requests from the TSA rep and did not oppose KAA's accepting both the Chinese bid and the Dutch contractor's design. Bhandari is expected to transfer from Washington to Nairobi in October, and we hope he will establish closer oversight over subsequent stages of the program.

#### Comment

¶10. (C) Embofffs have often advised KCAA that the only way to develop 100% screening and badge display is to develop a policy for everyone and stick to it, especially for senior GOK officials. Once established, the police can be required to comply. After relating expats' stories of bribed Customs officers allowing planes to arrive "empty" and then unload goods in a hangar, the DHS officer running the PISCES system at Wilson believes there are many GOK personnel at Wilson ready to facilitate entrance to Kenya for any arriving Somali. KAA could threaten to ban flights until Mogadishu airport establishes satisfactory security procedures, but miraa growers have powerful economic interests and political influence that have overcome previous bans.

HOOVER